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IRA MAN COULD BE SENT BACK

Political Asylum?

BY JOHN W. BARRY

Brian Pearson's nine-year struggle to remain in this country succeeded—or appeared to—last March, when a U.S. immigration judge ruled that his crimes back in Northern Ireland were political, and he would face persecution if he returned home. So Judge Philip T. Williams granted political asylum to the 45-year-old Rockland County carpenter.

But Pearson's victory was short-lived. In April, the Immigration and Naturalization Service appealed the decision, saying Williams was wrong and Pearson was a terrorist who should be sent back to Ireland. The U.S. Board of Immigration Appeals in Virginia is handling the appeal, and a ruling against Pearson could affect the status of six other Irish nationalists—also with IRA ties, and alleged to be terrorists—who are currently fighting deportation from this country. INS officials said it could take up to a year for Pearson's appeal to be ruled on.

And now the June 16 shootings of two Royal Ulster Constabulary officers in Northern Ireland by the IRA could further complicate Pearson's situation. Dan Michaelis, a spokesman for Representative Peter King, a Republican from Long Island, who has testified in Pearson's behalf, said that "the situation in the north is definitely going to reflect on these cases. There's no doubt that Brian would have benefited if the peace process was moving forward." Pearson's attorney, Martin Galvin, said, though, that he doubted the shootings would have any impact on Pearson and the other nationalists.

Pearson spent 12 years in a Northern Ireland prison after driving the getaway car in the 1975 IRA bombing of a Royal Ulster Constabulary barracks. No one was killed in the incident. He's reportedly been a model citizen with no criminal record since coming to America in 1988 following his release from jail.

Pearson has considerable support in the New York area. Among his backers is Galvin, a former assistant district attorney in the Bronx, who maintains that the British government has put pressure on this country to deport Pearson. Galvin also believes that from a British perspective, deporting Pearson would send a message to former IRA soldiers that they can't seek refuge here from harassment and persecution by Loyalist paramilitaries, even if they've served

their time. King has argued that Pearson is being used as a pawn. The congressman said dramatic sources once told him that British officers were upset at the "comfortable" lives for IRA soldiers enjoying in this country.

British officials deny such claims, say that Pearson's status is an internal matter for the United States. The INS and the Justice Department also deny that the British are playing a role in Pearson's deportation. A main point of the argument made by the INS is that antiterrorism legislation recently adopted by Congress in the wake of the World Trade Center and 1995 Oklahoma City bombings should have precluded Pearson from applying for political asylum because he is a convicted felon. The legislation



Brian Pearson with 5-year-old daughter Sloth

passed before the ruling on Pearson's asylum.

The INS said it doesn't matter that Pearson was granted special-category status as a prisoner by the British government—it only matters that he was convicted. But King and another New York congressman, Benjamin Gilman, Republican from Orange County and chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, testified at Pearson's trial that the antiterrorism law shouldn't apply to him. (King voted against the law, but Gilman—who represents Pearson's district—was a sponsor.) The congressman says that Pearson has served his time and is trying to carve out a life for himself, his Bronx-born wife and his daughter, also born here.

Serious Summitry?

BY JAMES RIDGEWAY

WASHINGTON—President Clinton's speech at the UN Earth Summit Thursday might be the beginning of a serious American approach to this all-important issue, signaling determination to sign an international treaty on climate change. Or, knowing Clinton, it might not. The UN meeting is one of several scheduled, culminating next December with a session in Kyoto, Japan, where the industrialized nations will try to reach firm limits on halting the destructive trend toward climate change.

(Ozone Action, an environmental group along with New York Public Interest Group and the Environmental Center, will stage a demonstration UN beginning at 9:30 a.m. Thurs. A growing number of scientists

that something dramatic has to be done to stop the burning of fossil fuels, or we'll end up melting the planet. It's a change that entails phasing in alternative fuels, possibly some new version of nuclear energy; that would amount to the biggest change in the way civilization is organized since the industrial revolution.

The U.S. is lagging behind the other industrialized nations. Already, it cannot meet its commitment to stabilize emissions by the year 2000. The Clinton administration has called for a legally binding agreement, but won't get down specifics with timetables and targets. The Clinton administration, on the other hand, is proposing a 15 per cent reduction by 2010 carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. The U.S. rejects these proposals. Meanwhile, Japan, watching to see what it can get away with, waffles until the U.S. makes up its mind.

Arrayed against any change are the Middle Eastern oil-producing countries—along with the energy-dependent, "blue-eyed" Arabs.

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